

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the Revocation)	
)	
or Suspension of the Teaching)	ORDER OF
)	
Certification of Laurence O. Seymour)	PERMANENT REVOCATION
)	
Certificate 081095)	

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on April 9, 2008. On January 30, 2008, the State Department of Education (Department) sent a notice of hearing to Mr. Seymour by certified mail, return receipt requested, delivery restricted to addressee. Mr. Seymour received the notice, as evidenced by a postal receipt bearing his signature, dated February 1, 2008. Mr. Seymour did not request a hearing within the time frame specified in the letter and is in default. After considering the evidence presented, the Board voted to permanently revoke Mr. Seymour's educator certificate 081095, effective April 9, 2008.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Seymour holds a valid South Carolina educator certificate and has over thirty years of teaching experience. He has been employed as a teacher by Anderson School District One (District) since 1988. During the 2007-2008 school year, the District assigned Mr. Seymour to Wren High School as a science teacher. Mr. Seymour resigned from employment with the District effective October 5, 2007, as a result of an investigation into allegations of sexual harassment and unprofessional conduct.

In late September 2005, a senior female student at Wren High School who had been a student in Mr. Seymour's class during her sophomore year

accused Mr. Seymour of sexual harassment. The student reported that Mr. Seymour had told her she was beautiful and had told her to try to come to see him during the day since she was no longer a student in any of his classes. Mr. Seymour admitted to contacting the student on various occasions. Mr. Seymour went to another teacher's classroom and asked the student for her cell phone number. The student told Mr. Seymour that she did not have a cell phone. Mr. Seymour stated that he had invited the student, in a joking manner, to accompany him on a trip to Asheville, North Carolina and then commented that he knew he would get into trouble if he took the student on the trip and anyone saw them together. Although the student did not go on the trip to Asheville, North Carolina with the teacher, Mr. Seymour did bring a stuffed lion back from his trip to Asheville, North Carolina and gave the lion to the student as a gift. Mr. Seymour drove by the student's house and told the student he had driven by her home. Mr. Seymour admitted to the assistant superintendent that he had exercised very poor judgment with the student. On September 28, 2007, the District placed Mr. Seymour on administrative leave.

The District continued its investigation. Dr. Chris Ferguson, the assistant principal, searched Mr. Seymour's classroom. Dr. Ferguson found numerous pictures of the female student in this matter as well as pictures of other current and former students, two pornographic magazines, several pornographic pictures of females and a notebook containing off-color jokes and emails. On October 4, 2007, Mr. Seymour resigned from his employment, effective October 5, 2007.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The South Carolina Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2004). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct, any conduct

involving moral turpitude, and evident unfitness for position for which employed. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004); 24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-58 (Supp. 2006). The Board finds that the preponderance of the evidence presented, which is undisputed by Mr. Seymour, supports its decision to permanently revoke Mr. Seymour's educator certificate 081095, effective April 9, 2008.

Now, therefore, it is ordered that the educator certificate of Laurence Odelle Seymour, certificate 081095 is permanently revoked. Mr. Seymour may never re-apply for an educator certificate in the State of South Carolina. The permanent revocation of Mr. Seymour's educator certificate 081095 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

By: 

Al Simpson, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
April 9, 2008